



NEW ZEALAND
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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NEWS FROM AUCKLANDUNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY by W.Ambrose.

Membership for last year stabilised at about one hundred, but even so, the range and volume of our activities increased. Some of our members have given brief reports of their particular areas of interest in this issue. New contributors to the Newsletter are:-

Mr. L.Birks, who as a foundation member of the Society has contributed an immense amount of work and enthusiasm to archaeology in the Auckland area. Apart from their work at the Pa at Sarah's Gully Mr and Mrs.Birks have recently spent several months excavating in Tonga. A retired manufacturing chemist, Mr. Birks intends spending most of his spare time on archaeological research. We can look forward to hearing much more of interest from him.

Mr. M.Rowell has only recently become a member of the University Archaeological Society; nevertheless with his great interest in field recording he has been nominated, along with another new member, Mr.R. Cook, as organiser for this aspect of archaeology.

Mr. G.M.Fowlds is well known for his work with the Historic Auckland Society, and his great interest in early Auckland History.

Mr. R.Jolly, an Insurance agent, has given enthusiastic support to local archaeological activities and carried out important work with Roger Green on the Coromandel Coast. His present interest lies in sites on the South Manukau-West Coast area.

Many other people too numerous to mention have of course been instrumental in making possible a great deal of the work reported here.

Study Groups: Field trips were organised to continue recording of sites at Kaipara when about thirty people were able to assist. For several weekends preceeding the Kaipara trip, study groups were held where members taking part had instruction in map reading and the use of aerial photographs. These activities were pursued under the leadership of Mr. L.M.Groube, the Society's Secretary.

Dr. A.W.Powell, conchologist at the Auckland Museum gave the Society an interesting lecture-study group on shells likely to be of importance in archaeology.

Meetings: Six meetings were held throughout the year, covering a varied range of topics. Mr. H.Parker discussed his impressions from first-hand knowledge of Libyan archaeology. Roger Green introduced some basic archaeological concepts and problems when he presented a lecture entitled 'Society and Archaeology.' Messrs. Parker, Groube and Ambrose presented individual reports on excavations at Opito, Rakoto, and Waitaki Gorge. Mr.V.Fisher from the Auckland Museum gave a highly useful lecture on the Maori dog, at the same time displaying many of the artifacts fashioned from its bones. Mr. Birks gave a report on his work in Tonga. Dr. B.Biggs spoke on origins and traditions of the New Zealand Maori.

This brief survey of our Auckland Society's interests, and the reports following, should illustrate that we are to some extent achieving our main aims, the most important being that members should become individually self-sufficient in a number of archaeological techniques. This year we have extended the range of study groups to fill some obvious gaps, namely in processing archaeological specimens, photography, and stratigraphical recording and interpretation. The number of ordinary meetings and study groups planned for this year is only determined by the time available.

Members: Mrs.Sue Bulmer is expected back shortly from archaeological research in New Guinea. Colin Smart has taken up a position as Assistant Ethnologist at the Dominion Museum; as much a gain for Wellington as a loss for Auckland.

Messrs. J.Golson, L.Groube, M.Smart and W.Ambrose recently returned from archaeological work in New Caledonia.

PA AT SARAH'S GULLY, COROMANDEL PENINSULAR by L. Birks.

Readers of the Newsletter will recall a report by Mr.J.Golson in the issue of March 1959 in which he described the first phase of excavation at the above site. This covered the first week's work by members of the Auckland University Archaeological Society on a small headland pa overlooking the area where three seasons work had already been done on a Moa-hunter site on the foreshore. If it could be proved that the pa fortifications also belonged to the Moa-hunter period, a very interesting and important item would

be added to our knowledge of this country's prehistory.

The area enclosed by the ditch and bank defences measured only about 180 feet by 60 feet, and the portion first dealt with included mainly the top of the ridge, where pits of two types were uncovered, of which no surface indications remained. The soil filling and sealing in these contained much haangi material, indicating a later occupation.

After the departure of the rest of the party at the end of January last year, work on the site was continued by the writer and his wife. An area between the original line of squares and the lateral defences to the south was opened up, revealing three further rectangular pits cut into the slope of the ridge. Two of these had no wall on the down-hill side, resembling terraces rather than pits. This may have been due to subsequent erosion rather than construction in this manner. The pattern of post or stake-holes associated with these structures varied in each case, but seemed to indicate that they had held supports for a lean-to or ridge-pole roof or cover.

Of the several haangi pits found in this area, one, which had been dug down into the sub-soil, had a concentration of 241 moa gizzard stones spreading fan-wise from it, down the slope. One of the several possible reasons for their presence that immediately suggests itself is the cooking of a moa in the haangi. The absence of bone in the vicinity is against this theory, but it is possible that all moa bone was removed to the working-floor area near the beach, where bone had been excavated in both worked and unworked condition.

Activities on the site were resumed by members of the Auckland group in December 1959, and continued into the autumn. Attention was given to all remaining areas likely to prove profitable. Several more rectangular pits were discovered, as in the case of those found earlier, mainly with the long axis running east and west, parallel with the central spine of the ridge. An exception was a shallow pit near the south-east corner of the site, in general the same as the others but oriented north and south. Aligned in the same direction were two pits, side by side within the central area, deeper, but much smaller than the others. The stake-hole pattern, however, was basically similar.

A portion of the floor area of two of the larger pits proved to be composed of disturbed material, and further investigation showed that in each case a deeper pit, roughly circular and narrowing towards the mouth, had existed at these points. In one, the stratigraphy was ill-defined, but the second showed clearly that it was earlier than the shallower pit, which had been cut partly through its fill. Every indication suggested

a partial filling of the deep pit with fine material eroded off the surrounding ground surface, followed by the collapse of the roof. This would leave, probably, nothing more than a hollow, utilised by later occupants of the site in the excavation of the rectangular pit.

A still later phase of occupation had been responsible for four haangi pits dug into the fill of the shallow pit, and four post-holes dug through the fill of both earlier pits. Thus three levels of occupation, to all appearances separate and distinct, were discernible in sequence in a little over three feet of material from the floor of the deep, or rua-type pit to the turf zone.

The occupation history of the site may therefore be divided into three phases, as follows:

Phase I. Marked by the occurrence of two pits, bell-shaped and comparatively deep, 14 feet apart near the highest point of the site. It may include also four others, close by, much smaller, but generally similar in design. Two further pits, quite different in appearance from those of the other side, may nevertheless be contemporaneous, since they have no obvious connection with either of the later phases, and in common with one of the larger pits, one had a layer of brown soil on the floor. Narrow in plan and straight-sided, they had a grave-like appearance, but the fill, clearly artificial, contained nothing except scattered charcoal and the ubiquitous flakes of andesite oven-stone.

Phase II. To this belongs a number of rectangular pits, with two exceptions, shallow in relation to floor area, and having a fairly regular pattern of associated postholds. Generally there were three or more on the longitudinal axis, and varying numbers up to four along one or both sides. The regular shape of some of these pits had been modified by later extensions.

Phase III. Characterised by haangi pits over a large part of the site, notably on the more level central portion, and by a liberal dispersal of material from these, including stones of local andesite, charcoal, shell, fish bone and flakes of obsidian. The pits in several cases had been dug into the fill of the earlier rectangular structures, but some of the largest had penetrated through the topsoil into the underlying rhyolitic material. Three of these latter were encircled by a series of postholes, in one case numbering nine. The purpose of these is uncertain, but in view of the exposed nature of the site, it is possible that the posts, or stakes supported a screen sheltering the haangi during the

cooking process. This theory is supported by the absence of stake-holes round the haangi pits on the landward and generally more sheltered slope of the ridge.

Near the westward end of the site, 18 feet from the nearest pit of any type, a small hollow dug to 24 inches from the surface contained a few human bones, in a very fragile condition, and three flakes of obsidian. To the east of this, on the edge of the slope to the sea, a deep but rather irregularly-shaped pit contained much midden material, including the barbed bone point of a composite fish-hook and the only complete adze found on the site. This was a strictly utilitarian example, not carefully finished and belonging to no particular type.

As well as the postholes round haangi pits, many others of varying sizes and depths clearly belonged to the third phase of occupation, but did not form any recognisable pattern. A large proportion contained stones, wedged into the sides of the hole to hold the post more securely.

The ditch and bank defences crossed the ridge top at the eastward extremity of the site, continuing at right angles as a scarp with ditch below, along the southern side almost to the westerly point of the headland. What had been thought from surface indications to be parallel, overlapping ditches at the eastern end, proved, on excavation to consist of a shallow trench, mainly without accompanying bank, completely across the ridge, and a deeper ditch with inner bank covering about a third of the distance. Gaps in the defences elsewhere, and the complete absence of palisade postholes, suggest that the short length was also intended to cross the ridge, but like the remainder of the defence system, was never completed. Four shallow holes, square in plan, on the side of the outer trench would seem to indicate a platform or other self-supporting structure.

Removal of the bank above the inner ditch disclosed a shallow rectangular pit typical of the second period of occupation, which had been cut through, then the remainder filled and entirely covered by material evidently dug from the ditch. This and other evidence makes it fairly certain that the defensive earthworks were a later development, probably belonging to Phase III.

Artefacts found on the site were mainly adze fragments, and though of more than one type, do not provide conclusive evidence of the origin of the pa.

Test pits were dug at six points on flat areas east of the

defended position, but produced no evidence of human interference, though a rectangular pit of Phase II type had been uncovered the previous year on rising ground near the shore. During the course of the pa excavations, three squares put down on a ravine terrace between the pa headland and the sea revealed two occupation layers. The upper was in part at least post-European, but the earlier level contained worked and unworked moa bone — some in association with haangi pits — and other material of early derivation.

In the case of the pa site, the evidence so far evaluated suggests that the defences were at least not of Moa-hunter construction, but C.I4 analysis of samples obtained may show if any of the earlier structures were contemporaneous with the site on the shore below, where people of the Moa-hunter culture undoubtedly lived and worked over 600 years ago.

EXCAVATIONS AT PAKOTORE, PAENGAROA, BAY OF PLENTY
by J. Golson (Continued from p.14).

The ditch between areas 1 and 2 proved to be a remarkable feature. Eight feet deep below its outer lip, it measures 16 feet across the top. The sides fall increasingly steeply to a perfectly flat bottom just over 5 feet wide.

No artefacts were found, and little foreign material of any kind. The Pakotore excavations have, however, provided data of an uncomplicated sort in the ground plans of rectangular pits, the elucidation of whose features and functions is of great importance in North Island settlement archaeology, since the pits themselves are so numerous and widespread.